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A Word About Low-Sodium Diets

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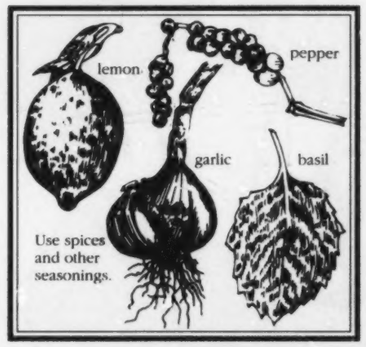
Cutting down on salt may sound difficult and distasteful. But it doesn't have to be either, and the health consequences can be significant, for reducing the amount of salt or sodium in the diet may aid some people with high blood pressure.

Salt, or more correctly sodium (salt is 40 percent sodium), is important to the body. However, excessive salt in the diet has been linked with hypertension, or high blood pressure. High blood pressure, in turn, can result in heart or kidney disease or stroke.

We Americans are generally accustomed to highly salted foods. It's a taste we acquire almost from birth. We not only like to salt our foods heavily, but we are also accustomed to packaged and processed foods that have salt added to them.

However, concern about the link between sodium and high blood pressure has brought about changes. Many people have learned to cut down on the salt they use in cooking and at the table. They usually report that after awhile they just don't miss the salty taste. It's generally best to cut back gradually to give the tastebuds time to adjust.



People are also using food labels to help reduce their sodium consumption, as more and more labels list the salt content of products. In addition, food manufacturers offer a variety of low-sodium products.

Sodium amounts are often listed in milligrams (mg) per serving on food labels. A milligram is a tiny fraction of an ounce, but the important thing to remember is that 1,100 to 3,300 milligrams of sodium per day is a safe and adequate amount. (For the record, a teaspoon of salt contains nearly 2,000 milligrams of sodium.) However, your physician may determine that your sodium consumption should be a lesser amount. If your doctor determines, for example, that your intake should be 2,000 milligrams a day and a food label reveals that the product contains 500 milligrams per serving, you would know that one serving has one-fourth of the sodium that may be safe and adequate for you that day.

Labels that don't list ingredients by amounts will carry the items in the order of their weight. That is, the first ingredient listed will be the one most used in the product. So if salt comes third on the list, it is the third most prevalent ingredient.

On such labels, the sodium-conscious reader will also look for other items that contain sodium, such as monosodium glutamate, baking soda (also identified as sodium bicarbonate), garlic salt, brine, and sodium citrate.

Some foods are low in sodium. These include most fresh fruits and vegetables, fresh meats and poultry, hot cereals, and grains. Items that run high in sodium include baked goods, most cheeses, lunch meats, seafood, many dry cereals, and some canned or dehydrated soups.

When cooking, salt can be used sparingly on numerous foods or can be eliminated entirely by using spices, herbs and other seasonings. Lemon, lime, basil, garlic, oregano and, of course, pepper are but a few of the seasonings that might be

Cornflakes
Nutrition Information
(Per Serving)

Serving Size: 3/4 oz. (21.3 g)
Servings Per Package: 1

Calories	80
Protein	2 g
Carbohydrate	18 g
Fat	0 g
Sodium	215 mg

Percentage of U.S. Recommended Daily Allowances (U.S. RDA)

Protein	2
Vitamin A	15
Vitamin C	15
Thiamine	15
Riboflavin	15
Niacin	15
Calcium	0
Iron	6
Vitamin D	8
Vitamin B_6	15
Folic Acid	15

used in more generous quantities or in place of salt.

In addition to the low- and reduced-sodium food products now available, shoppers can choose from a number of nonprescription medications with reduced sodium content.

A word about salt substitute products: Generally these products are high in potassium. Sodium and potassium work in delicate balance in the body. Salt substitutes can be safely used by most people, but not those with certain medical conditions, such as kidney disease.

In summary, here are some tips to help you cut down on your sodium consumption:

- **Use the saltshaker sparingly.** Don't use it until you've tasted your food.
- **Read food labels.** Look for the amount of sodium in a product. See where salt or sodium is on the ingredient list.
- **Look for low-salt, low-sodium, or sodium-reduced products.**
- **Try cooking with less salt.** Use spices and other seasonings.
- **Remember: A teaspoon of salt contains almost 2,000 milligrams of sodium.**
- **Give yourself a little time to get adjusted to a diet lower in sodium.** Most people make the adjustment and enjoy it.

Here are some blends that can be used instead of salt for specific foods:

Egg herbs: basil, dill weed (leaves), garlic, parsley

Fish herbs: basil, bay leaf (crumbled), French tarragon, lemon thyme, parsley (options: fennel, sage, savory)

Poultry herbs: lovage, marjoram (two parts), sage (three parts)

Salad herbs: basil, lovage, parsley, French tarragon

Tomato sauce herbs: basil (two parts), bay leaf, marjoram, oregano, parsley (options: celery leaves, cloves)

Vegetable herbs: basil, parsley, savory

Italian blend: basil, marjoram, oregano, rosemary, sage, savory, thyme

Barbeque blend: cumin, garlic, hot pepper, oregano

French herbal combinations:

Fines herbes: parsley, chervil, chives, French tarragon (sometimes adding a small amount of basil, fennel, oregano, sage or saffron)

Bouquet garni *mixtures:* bay, parsley (two parts), thyme. The herbs may be wrapped in cheesecloth or the parsley wrapped around the thyme and bay leaf.

For more information, write to: Sodium, HFE-88, at the address below.

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